



HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Holiday Precautions to Protect Against Stomach Virus

Stanislaus County - The Stanislaus County Health Services Agency is encouraging everyone to take additional steps to prevent the spread of stomach virus that can affect our community during the busy holiday season. The additional steps are especially important at this time of year when people gather for holiday celebrations where a lot of food is being served.

“As you visit with family and friends, it is important to practice frequent and thorough hand washing, or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers,” said Dr. John Walker, Stanislaus County Public Health Officer. “These steps are even more critical when visiting with seniors because they are at higher risk to become severely ill when exposed to stomach virus.”

Known as norovirus, the agent is transmissible not only through person-to-person contact, but also through surfaces and food infected by someone with the virus. The transmission of this virus can be well-contained just by taking a few extra precautions in personal and environmental hygiene.

Symptoms of the virus include nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. The illness is self-limiting and usually lasts 24-48 hours. Antibiotics are not necessary for treatment. The greatest risk is dehydration, especially for young children, the medically fragile, and the elderly.

You can decrease your chance of coming in contact with norovirus by following these steps:

- Frequently wash your hands, especially after toilet visits and changing diapers and before eating or preparing food.
- Wash your hands when visiting seniors at their home or care facility; also be sure that children do the same.
- Carefully wash fruits and vegetables, and steam oysters before eating them.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of illness by using a bleach-based household cleaner.
- Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with virus after an episode of illness (use hot water and soap).

Further information on norovirus can be found at the HSA website: www.hsahealth.org.

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